

Julia Brownley NEWS

41st Assembly District



A MONTHLY ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER TO THE 41ST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT
(Including Agoura, Agoura Hills, Calabasas, Encino, Hidden Hills, Lake Sherwood, Malibu, Oak Park, Pacific Palisades, Port Hueneme, South Oxnard, Santa Monica, Tarzana, Topanga, Westlake Village, and Woodland Hills)

September/October 2007

The Perfect [Fire] Storm Hits Malibu

Wildfire is the familiar but unwelcome visitor in Malibu. In the early hours of Sunday morning, October 21, a wind-whipped brush fire took off, sparked apparently by a downed power pole, and became a firestorm of fearsome proportion. Within 48 hours,



4,400 acres had burned, and ultimately 20 structures damaged and eight destroyed, including the dramatic Castle Kashan perched high above the city. The beautiful Malibu Presbyterian Church was one of the first casualties, burning to the ground Sunday morning as congregants were getting ready to attend Sunday services. Although the fire came right down to Webster Elementary School's back fence, only the fence and an outbuilding suffered any real damage. 1,500 people were evacuated. Mercifully, no lives were lost.

This was a fire that had been feared and expected. Following two years of record drought, vegetation in the Santa Monica Mountains was parched to the point that even trees that looked healthy and were green and growing had so little moisture in them that they were going to burn.

As always, the first responders were heroic, but were doing battle with swirling winds that gusted and propelled burning embers at hurricane speeds. Helicopters fought the air turbulence and smoke to drop water and flame retardant along the fire lines. Tanker planes ("Super Scoopers") were brought in to add to the air power. The L.A. County Fire Department was the lead agency, along with resources from California State Parks, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, the Mountains



Recreation and Conservation Authority, and other open space and park entities. Firefighters and equipment poured into Malibu from all over the state. But for the skilled and swift response, and a little luck that the winds were blowing toward the ocean and not inland, the entire Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area could have been reduced to ashes.



Assemblymember Brownley, Sheriff Leroy Baca, Mayor Pro Tem Pamela Conley Ulich

Proper brush clearance likely saved countless homes

In addition to the massive response from the firefighters, adequate brush clearance and the use of fire-resistant materials on the exterior of homes were frequently cited as accounting for the minimal loss of structures in the mountains.

I stayed in close touch with Malibu and County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, including at two briefings by fire officials. I am committed to insuring that the state will do whatever is necessary to help all of the communities in Southern California impacted by the fire as we now move into the reconstruction and recovery period. Check my website at www.assembly.ca.gov/brownley for links to sites for fire-related information.

Please keep all the families who have lost their homes and precious memories in your thoughts and prayers. And let's continue to express our gratitude to firefighters, wherever we may meet them, for all that they have done and continue to do on a daily basis.

And then came the scams...

On Tuesday morning, October 30, I received an e-mail from a New York resident, letting me know that an e-mail was circulating, purporting to be a letter from me sent by the IRS, soliciting donations to help fire victims. Except that it wasn't from the IRS, and it wasn't by me. It was a doctored transcript of a speech that I had made that had been posted on the Assembly website, asking people to make donations to a bogus "IRS" website. A little preliminary investigation in the Capitol determined that the origin appeared to be out of the U.S., which may be why the IRS, an agency that has nothing to do with disaster relief, was selected. I took immediate action to get the word out via the press that this was a fraud, that people should be warned against opening it, and referred it to appropriate law enforcement authorities for further investigation.

It was the ugly side of the tragedies that occurred over the past two weeks – attempting to capitalize on the highest instincts of people to rally in support of others who have suffered terrible losses. I hope that whoever initiated this particular fraud, and all others that are certainly out there, can be identified and face justice.

2007 Legislative Wrap Up

I was very pleased as a freshman legislator to have ten of my bills pass out of the Legislature and get to the Governor's desk. I was particularly proud to have the Governor sign my bills that will:

- Insure that all state funded or state administered sex education programs will be bias-free (**AB 629**);
- Align California's laws with Federal law to facilitate the sharing of information needed for the medical and mental health treatment of children in foster care (**AB 1687**).
- Require residential hotels to provide secure or locking mailboxes for their tenants. Currently, mail is generally delivered unsorted to a hotel's front desk, with no assurance of proper delivery and protection of privacy. (**AB 607**)
- Protect the integrity of ongoing criminal investigations by making the solicitation or leaking of such information for compensation a misdemeanor (**AB 920**).

It was equally disappointing, however, to have the Governor veto some bills that were important to me and that would have been important protections for Californians:

- **AB 435** would have extended the time period during which victims of gender-based wage discrimination could file claims. With payroll information kept confidential by employers, it is manifestly unfair when workers are not able to uncover the inequity fast enough.
- **AB 546** would have provided more information to consumers from manufacturers and at the point of sale on how to properly dispose of and recycle covered electronic devices. Too often, they end up in landfills, leaching heavy metals and other toxins into the soil and groundwater.
- **AB 1113** would have eliminated the sunset provision of the "California Working Disabled Program," and amended some of the limitations on qualifying to enroll.
- **AB 1148** spoke to the need of school districts to have as many rigorous options as possible in choosing instructional materials.
- **AB 1379** would have required the Superintendent of Public Instruction to identify additional criteria and measures by which proficient high school students could demonstrate their competence to receive a diploma.

I'm already at work going through all of the bill ideas that I've received and been collecting, many submitted by constituents, in order to decide which will be introduced next year. My 2008 legislative package will also include several 2007 bills that I decided to carry over to next year for further research before moving them. If you have a viable bill idea that you would like me to consider for next year, I'd very much like to hear from you. Please e-mail the idea to me at Assemblymember.brownley@asm.ca.gov.

Governor Signs SB 990 to Cleanup Toxic Santa Susana Field Lab Site

THE GOOD NEWS

SB 990, authored by Senator Sheila Kuehl and which I was proud to co-author, has been signed and will go into effect on January 1, 2008. I worked very hard to get this bill through the Assembly, and was pleased to obtain bipartisan support when it came to the Assembly Floor.



Senator Kuehl, however, was the real champion in persisting and carrying bill after bill over the years, until this one finally happened. SB 990 will require the Boeing Company to cleanup this highly-contaminated former rocket and engine testing site in the Simi Hills to full EPA standards that will protect the public health. And Boeing has agreed that the site will never be released for development, which will also give the wildlife and habitat a chance to recover from the environmental damage of decades. That's the good news.

THE WAIT-AND-SEE NEWS

The Governor only agreed to sign SB 990 expressly on condition that Senator Kuehl agree to carry a "trailer" bill next year that will remove the very specific cleanup standards set forth in SB 990 and replace them with new language to be negotiated between the Governor and Boeing that says only that it will be cleaned up to non-specific and undefined "residential" standards.

Boeing is claiming that the standards in SB 990 are impossible to achieve, and professing its readiness to agree to an alternative cleanup standard that will protect the public. Given the terrible history of environmental violations and resistance by Boeing and its predecessors over decades, their assurances must be viewed with some justifiable skepticism.

One of my priorities when the trailer bill is introduced will be to work with the Governor's office to try and open the negotiations to public participation to insure that the new negotiated cleanup standard is one that leaves the site truly safe. It is the public that has suffered the high cancer rates and deaths near the site. They must have a voice in the cleanup so that everyone for generations to come may one day safely enjoy this property.

Education Workshop on Nov. 8

GETTING TO THE POINT

"Sharpening the Focus on Educational Progress and Efficiency in California"

You are cordially invited to a forum on pre-K through 12 education finance and reform. Hear from legislative leaders and experts about moving more efficiently and effectively to increase student achievement and success, and what can be done at the state level to improve the current educational system.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 8 – 10:00 A.M.

AGOURA HILLS CITY HALL

30001 Ladyface Court, Agoura Hills

Speakers include ***Jorge Ruiz de Velasco, Stanford University; Jon Sonstelie, UCSB; Ted Lempert, Children Now; Rick Pratt, California School Boards Association; Jacob Adams, Claremont Graduate University; and Richard Seder, Education Policy Consultant.***

Phone my District Office for directions – (818) 596-4141

Calabasas Farmers Market

While we're out of session, I'm trying to get out into the communities of the vast 41st Assembly District as much as possible so I can hear from constituents first hand about what's important to them. Thank you to the many constituents who were out shopping at the charming Calabasas Farmer's market and took the time to stop by my table and introduce themselves.



JPL Tour

For the first time in five years, the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) invited state legislators and their staff on a tour of their laboratory in Pasadena. The tour was specifically planned to introduce State Legislators to the accomplishments and future projects of one of the leaders in U.S. space exploration. JPL staff gave the delegation a first-hand look at some of the technology and robotics behind not only previous moon landings but also the current Mars exploration and deep space projects. The tour concluded with a presentation by Dr. Diane Evans on JPL's research on climate change, which included a discussion of possible solutions, including bioengineering, that may be used to help reverse its course.



MTA Tour

Developing a truly workable system of mass transit in Los Angeles is a challenge that absolutely must be met. Timothy Lippman, my transportation deputy in the District Office, and I had the chance to meet with Metro's CEO Roger Snoble and a number of MTA officials at their headquarters in October to discuss pending projects including the critical budget implications, and to take a short tour.



One of the projects that will assist my San Fernando Valley constituents will be the extension of the wildly-successful Orange Line northward to the Metrolink station in Chatsworth. It could extend even further to the 118 freeway along the north edge of the Valley.

The tour was fascinating. We were led by Dennis Mori, Executive Officer on the Gold Line Eastside Extension project, we started with the state-of-the-art tunnel construction taking place east of downtown Los Angeles. Donning hard hats and emergency breathing apparatus, we went into the active construction area to see how the twin tunnels are being built – and with an amazing safety record of 2.3 million hours without a day-away from work accident.

Mid-day we met with Samantha Bricker and Gaby Gonzalez of the Expo Authority at the location where Phase I of the Expo Line (from Culver City to downtown L.A.) will connect with the planned Phase II, completing the line from Culver City to my home city of Santa Monica. We drove along both of the two contemplated alignments, and whichever is ultimately selected, it is clear that there is much work yet to be done to make this downtown-to-the-sea light rail line a reality. I intend to do everything in my power to help facilitate the most efficient process and all needed approvals.

A Calendar Girl, at Last ...

I had to live quite a while, but on October 25, I finally became an official calendar girl. The L.A. Westside Chapter of the National Women's Political Caucus formally released their **2008 Women Leaders Calendar**, and I am thrilled, and very honored, to appear on the March page. All twelve months' worth of women honorees were recognized at a wonderful reception, which served also to help draw attention to the important work of the NWPC in supporting pro-choice women in government and public service. My children are still coming to grips with the notion of their mother as a calendar girl. I think it's cool.



National Do Not Call Registry

If you're tired of unwanted phone calls and solicitations, then you should be registered with the National Do Not Call system. You can block calls on both cell phone numbers and land lines, and it will take you less than 2-3 minutes to do so.

Just go to www.donotcall.gov/register/reg.aspx and follow the simple registration steps. If you are already registered, although that was only good for five years, you will not be dropped from the list pending certain decisions by the FTC and Congress on whether or not they will make registration permanent. Still, you can re-register just to be sure that you do not lose this useful protection.

Committee and Legislative Appointments

Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee #2 on Education

Aging and Long-Term Care

Budget

Budget Subcommittee #3 on Resources

Education

Natural Resources

Joint Legislative Budget Committee

Select Committee on Community Colleges

Select Committee on Domestic Violence

Legislative Liaison, Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission

Legislative Participant, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy

California Commission on the Status of Women

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